

TransGriot

A proud unapologetic Black trans woman speaking truth to power and discussing the world around her since 2006

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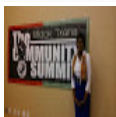


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Saying it loud, I'm unapologetically Black, trans and proud!



About The TransGriot



Monica Roberts

Monica Roberts, AKA the TransGriot (Gree-oh) is a native Houstonian, GLAAD award winning blogger, writer, and award winning trans human rights advocate. She's the founding editor of TransGriot, and her writing has appeared at the Bilerico Project, Ebony.com, The Huffington Post and the Advocate. She works to foster understanding and acceptance of trans people inside and outside communities of color. Among her many honors are the Virginia Prince Transgender Pioneer

Tuesday, October 20, 2015

2015 Virginia Prince Transgender Pioneer Award Acceptance Speech



TransGriot Note: This is the text of the speech I'm currently delivering at Fantasia Fair that's entitled 'A Fantastic Voyage Towards Trans Human Rights Progress'

Good afternoon to Barbara Curry, Jamie Dailey, Dallas Denny, Mary Beth Cooper, Miqqi Gilbert, Fantasia Fair staff and volunteers, my fellow transpeople, my mentor Dainna Cicotello, Fantasia Fair attendees, significant others and spouses, allies and friends.

Thank you Denise Norris for that wonderful introduction, and thank you for the work that you have done to make this world better for all of us.

Thanks also to the Fantasia Fair team that has worked hard to not only make it possible for me to be standing in front of you delivering this speech, but is working daily to make this week a special and enjoyable one for all of you here in attendance here in Provincetown today and for the rest of the 41st edition of this conference.



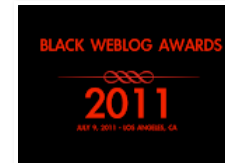
I am pleased and proud to be standing before you making history this afternoon as the first African-American transperson to be honored by Fantasia Fair with the Virginia Prince Transgender Pioneer Award. I enthusiastically accept it on behalf of

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2011 BWA Best LGBT Blog Finalist



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TransGriot Speaking/Education Efforts Info

Award, and the Robert Coles Call of Service Award

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TransGriot Blog Mission Statement

The TransGriot blog's mission is to become the griot of our community. I will introduce you to and talk about your African descended trans brothers and trans sisters across the Diaspora, reclaim and document our chocolate flavored trans history, speak truth to power, comment on the things that impact our trans community from an Afrocentric perspective and enlighten you about the general things that go on around me and in the communities that I am a member of.

--Mission Statement compiled January 2, 2011

The TransGriot Loves Comments

Feel free to leave comments on the posts. But bear in mind that you are guests in my cyberhome. As soon as I get to them, your comments are posted **at my pleasure**.

They will post as soon as I approve them, so

myself and the trans ancestors who preceded me in proudly living our trans lives and fighting for our humanity and freedom.

I also accept this award in the name of all of the people we have lost this year be it through murder or suicide, and may we please have a moment of silence to remind ourselves their lives mattered.

Thank you.

While I may be the first African-American trans person honored with this Virginia Prince Transgender Pioneer Award, I emphatically believe I won't be the last one to be so honored. We have some people who have been and still are trailblazing African-American leaders such as Marisa Richmond, Kylar Broadus, Dawn Wilson, Miss Major and Louis Mitchell just to name a few who could have easily been standing here today instead of me.

But hey, I'm not going to lie. I am so happy y'all gave it to me.

It's actually fitting when you think about it, since Texans have figured prominently in shaping the history of the modern trans community. My fellow Texan Phyllis Frye, who won this award in 2003 is called 'The Godmother of the Trans Rights Movement for providing the innovative leadership we needed at that time as an out trans woman. She got the Houston anti-crossdressing law killed in August 1980.

She founded the Houston based ICTLEP conferences that started in 1992 and helped organize the trans community, got us focused on the legal aspects of being transgender, got us on the same page politically, instilled a sense of pride in being out, trans and proud, and trained my generation of activists.

The second gender clinic founded in this country after the now closed Johns Hopkins one was in Galveston, TX. in the early 70s at the University of Texas Medical Branch there. To the west of me in San Antonio the Texas 'T' Party organized in 1988 by Linda and Cynthia Phillips was mushrooming from a regional crossdresser and trans gathering into the then largest trans themed event in the country before it shut down in 1996 and the Atlanta based Southern Comfort grew to take that title.

When the National Transgender Advocacy Coalition was founded in 1999 at an Italian restaurant in Bethesda, MD, two Texans were sitting at that table helping to put it together in myself and Vanessa Edwards Foster.

And that legacy of innovative Lone Star State trans leadership continues with Josephine Tittsworth's founding of the Texas Transgender Nondiscrimination Summit, which has resulted in 20 Texas colleges and universities and five school districts adopting trans inclusive policies. Carter Brown has grown Black Trans Men Inc from a trans masculine centered conference that happened in Dallas to the Black Trans Advocacy Conference that will be held again in Big D in late April

We have trans leaders emerging across our state that is bigger than France like Lou Weaver, Nell Gaiter, Dr Oliver Blumer, Dee Dee Watters, Lauryn Farris, Katy Stewart, Robyn Morgan Collado, Ana Andrea Molina and Nikki Araguz Loyd.

Thanks fellow trans Texans for your contributions in making the trans community, Texas and our local communities better for transkind.

So don't hate on Texas, appreciate it because of our tradition of producing some kick ass trans leaders, and contrary to outside of Texas public opinion, Austin is not the only spot in my bigger than France sized state that is a liberal progressive bastion.

There is also the Rio Grande Valley, Corpus Christi, El Paso, Dallas, San Antonio, Beaumont-Port Arthur and my soon to be third largest city in the US hometown of Houston,

Houston has proudly elected Annise Parker, an out lesbian and longtime LGBT community activist as our mayor three times, and we will shock the world again on November 3 when my fellow Houstonians reject right wing fear and smear campaign tactics and vote to keep the HERO.

For those of you who are not aware of my story beyond what you have seen printed in your Fantasia Fair program, here is the short version. I have been on my evolutionary trans feminine journey for 21 years and counting. I love history and I am a Christian in the Rev. Dr MLK Jr liberation theology mode of my faith. I have been involved in trans human rights activism at the local and state level in Kentucky and Texas, and the federal level since 1998.

I have an award winning nearly ten year old blog called TransGriot that according to my haters nobody reads.

I am an unapologetically Black Texas trans angelic troublemaker who has zero



The TransGriot is available for speaking engagements, college lectures, panel discussions, media interviews, conferences or Trans 101 education efforts for your school, business or professional organizations.

For local Houston area, Texas or national events, you can e-mail me at transgriot@yahoo.com

For events outside the Houston metro area, I ask that my travel and lodging expenses be covered.

This is **separate** from my speaking fee.

If you are interested in having me appear as a speaker or panelist, you can e-mail me with the date and details of your proposed event.



Please book as early as possible because my speaking and event calendar slots during the year rapidly fill up.

CMBA Disclaimer



This personal blog allows me to express my constitutionally guaranteed First Amendment free speech rights and kick knowledge to y'all at the same time on various issues.

Nothing in it shall be construed, spun, remixed, altered or interpreted to mean it represents the views of my employers or the boards of the organizations that I sit on.

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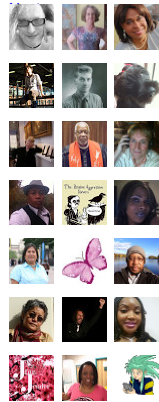
no need to repeat sending them.

I strive to make it a safe zone for people to respectfully express themselves, but I have **zero tolerance** for hate speech, transphobic or blatantly disrespectful comments or ad spam.

I reserve the right to edit your comments for clarity or not post them at all.

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tolerance for TERFs, fundamentalist idiots, trans community sellouts and anyone else who wishes to oppress and demonize trans people or trample the human rights of others. And I vote in every election cycle despite your attempts Texas GOP to make that harder for me and other people they hate in the Lone Star State to do.

At the time I transitioned on April 4, 1994, the landscape for trans people was light years different than it is now. Minnesota was the only state along with ten cities, Los Angeles, Chicago, San Francisco, Seattle, St. Paul, MN, Harrisburg, PA, Champaign, IL, Urbana IL, Santa Cruz, CA, and Grand Rapids, MI which had trans inclusive nondiscrimination laws. We were a few months from doing a national lobby day in Washington DC, and the trans human rights case law was sketchy at best,

We now have 16 states, the District of Columbia and over 200 jurisdictions that have trans inclusive laws. We are starting to have court rulings go in our favor and even popular culture is starting to add trans characters like the CBS soap *The Bold and the Beautiful*, *Transparent* and *Orange Is The New Black*.

And sometimes they will even have wonder of wonders, trans actors like Scott Turner Schofield and Laverne Cox, playing trans characters.

We are also a few months from seeing the 15,000 trans people in our armed forces get the ability to openly serve our country. Thanks to TAVA, SPARTA, our allies and people inside our military like Sgt. Shane Ortega who pushed our nation to do what 16 other countries have already done and allowed trans people to enthusiastically answer the call to serve our nation.

Why is that important? Because people like Kristin Beck, Amanda Simpson, Brynn Tannehill and our trans elders like Monica Helms, Christine Jorgensen and Allyson Robinson have in common is they served in the military, and are now using those leadership skills to benefit our community and our nation.

Another thing I have been moved and gratified to see is the emergence of trans teen leaders like Jazz Jennings, Nicole Maines and others with the help and loving support of their amazing parents, step up around the country to not only educate their peers about trans issues, but fight for their own and our human rights while kicking knowledge to us trans elders and others outside our community as well.

I can't forget my amazing sister Fallon Fox, who is kicking ass and taking names in the women's MMA world while my sportswriting sis Christina Kahrl is reporting the sports news.

And speaking of reporters, I can't forget the trailblazing Eden Lane, who was the first out trans woman to report on a national political convention back in 2008 when she did so for PBS during the historic Democratic National Convention in Denver that served as then Sen. Barack Obama's springboard to a presidency that has been the best ever for trans people.

I have been proud to see Geena Rocero, Isis King, Andreja Pejic, Carmen Carrera, Arisce Wanzer and others continue down the path that people like April Ashley, Caroline Cossey, Tracy Africa Norman, Roberta Close and Lauren Foster blazed down the world's fashion runways.

And even in the tech world, we are represented in that world by Dr Kortney Ziegler and Angelica Ross building on the accomplishments of Dr Lynn Conway.

But unfortunately one thing hasn't changed since I began my own transition, and that is the level of anti-trans violence aimed at our community.

We received another reminder of it happening on the eve of this conference when Zella Ziona Smith was murdered last Thursday in Maryland. The thing that infuriates me is that she was just 21 years old and continues the upsetting to me pattern of trans women of color taking the disproportionate brunt of it.

Thankfully the waste of DNA who is accused of killing her was arrested by the Montgomery County MD police and is rotting in jail without bond.

I am going to say this and continue to say it loudly and proudly until they bury me six feet under my beloved Texas soil. As a person who is unapologetically Black and trans, my transition does not mean because you don't like my Black trans behind or my Black trans brothers and trans sisters, you can unilaterally erase us from the Black community we are an intertwined kente cloth part of.

Neither will we put up with in Trans and LGBT World attempts to erase us from the community we have shed blood for, helped to create or its historical record.

We trans peeps are part of the diverse mosaic of human life on Planet Earth and didn't just pop up in the late 20th early 21st century. You haters of all ethnic

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backgrounds don't like the fact we trans peeps exist, tough.

We ain't having it or putting up with that crap any more because Black trans issues are Black community issues and vice versa. Trigger happy policing and voter suppression negatively affect me as an unapologetically Black trans person along with the historic demonization of Blackness and Black femininity.

We have seen far too many people in Houston, including a mayoral candidate named Ben Hall and misguided hypocritical Black ministers who share my ethnic background in this battle to keep our much needed human rights law bearing false witness against the trans community. We in Black TBLG Houston are not going to tolerate that revolting development, especially when the off the charts anti-trans hate being spewed is resulting in the deaths of my trans younglings.

Hate thoughts + hate speech = hate violence is an equation that leads to the deaths of far too many of our people here and around the world. And it needs to stop.

Black community, when will #BlackTransLivesMatter enough to you for you to get off your asses and recognize that our babies are being killed? I am beyond sick and tired of being sick and tired of having to remind Black America that Black transpeople are Black people too.

I've discussed some issues pertinent to our community, so let's shift gears for a moment and talk about where do I see this amazing trans human rights voyage we are on needing to go?

One thing we need to do ASAP is have more trans people run for public office. As that attempt in several states to criminalize being trans in this 2015 legislative cycle points out, we need to be writing the laws that govern us and not on our knees begging to kill the bad bills or get included in the good ones that advance our human rights.

And before you ask me if I am going to take my own advice and run Moni run, let's just say I am seriously thinking about it.

I would also like to see every trans person who is eligible to do so to not only register to vote, but to exercise it in each and EVERY election cycle. If we wish to see trans city council members, trans judges, trans mayors, trans state legislators, trans congress members and a trans president someday, we've got to do our part and provide the trans candidate that steps up to run for office support that includes a cadre of base voters they can reliably count on.

We also need as a trans community to be proactive in tackling systemic race issues in our ranks and doing the hard work to dismantle racism, sexism, homophobia and internalized transphobia in our ranks. Some of our trans brothers need to stop being as misogynistic as their cis masculine counterparts and be the quality men of trans experience we know they can be.

And as Precious Davis and Myles Brady have been role modeling lately, trans men and trans women loving each other is a powerful and revolutionary act.

As the stats from the 2011 NTDS point out, my transition as an African descended transperson is not like many of yours in this Fantasia Fair room, and neither is it like the one our Latina trans sisters like Arianna Lint, Jennicet Gutierrez, Ruby Corado, Joanna Cifredo and Elizabeth Rivera among others face.

We have an opportunity to role model to the rest of cis world what the Beloved Community that the Rev. Dr Martin Luther King, Jr talked about looks like in practice. White that is going to be a bumpy process at times, it need to be done as part of our ongoing community building efforts.

We must to do a better job on addressing HIV/AIDS issues in Trans World, and the recent Positively Trans Survey was a major first step to doing precisely that.

And people, to borrow the words of Elizabeth Rivera, #StopThe Shade. We have an array of enemies from the Catholic and Southern Baptist Churches to the TERF's, FOX Noise and the conservative movement hating on us.

There is enough work that needs to be done in Trans World and beyond across this country for all of us to excel and shine. It is time to get busy figuring out what you wish to do, if you have the talent and skill set to accomplish that mission you laid out for yourselves, and get busy making positive change happen. We do not need to be hating on each other when the reality is we have enemies who wish to destroy all of us.

We need to have regular intergenerational conversations with each other. I enjoy the phone calls I get for example from Miss Major and Sharyn Grayson, and I'm committing to having more conversations with younger trans activistsgoing

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forward. I learn just as much from those conversations as you do from me.

I was blessed to have one of those conversations with Sylvia Rivera in May 2000, and trans younglings, I wish to do for you what Sylvia did for me as a neophyte trans activist. Those intersectional conversations are important in passing along our history, strategy and tactics, training our replacements in this struggle, and building pride in being the trans men and trans women we are.

We are blessed to be in a tipping point moment for not only the acceptance of trans people in all walks of life, but seeing trans human rights progress grow around the world.

I can't wait to see how this fantastic voyage of trans human rights progress is going to transpire (pun intended) in the next five to ten years and what exciting things are in store for us.

I also hope we remember the words of the late Nelson Mandela as we continue on this trans human rights voyage when he said, 'For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that enhances the freedom of others'

I am proud to be doing my part at this pivotal moment in our history to help our community do exactly that as we continue to steer the SS Trans Human Rights to the safe harbor of codified human rights and having our humanity recognized until I have to pass the steering wheel of this ship to the next generation of trans leaders

And I'm confident that when that day comes, the SS Trans Human Rights will be in good hands.

Thank you, may God bless us and our community, may we love one another and ourselves, and you have a wonderful rest of your time here at Fantasia Fair 41.

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